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SUBJECT: DAWA MEETING IN KIDAL NOT MUCH TO TALK ABOUT

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[1](#)C. IIR 6 958 0009 10

Classified By: Political Counselor Peter Newman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Summary: In early November the Dawa movement - also known as Jama,at al-Tabligh - hosted an international meeting in Kidal, Mali. Dawa arrived in Mali in the early-1990s and has not been able to attract a significant number of adherents. While a fundamentalist ideology, Dawa in Mali has not preached or incited to violence against non-Muslims or Westerners. Two northern Malian sources, and POLFSN, all present in Kidal when the conference took place, say the Dawa meeting in Kidal attracted only a few hundred participants and lasted only one day. This contradicts a previous report (TD-314/079710-09) that the meeting lasted two days and attracted 1,000 attendees. Two sources worried the Malian military and intelligence services would attempt to use the Dawa meeting to link AQIM to the Kidal Tuareg communities. Others sources also questioned the political acumen of the conference organizer, Iyad ag Ghali, a prominent Kidal Tuareg politician and currently Malian Consul General in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia. Overall, Malians, Tuaregs in particular, do not/not consider Dawa to be a threat to Malian culture or the traditional Malian practice of Sufi Islam. End summary.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) In early November 2009, the Dawa movement - aka Jamaat al-Tabligh - held an international conference in Kidal, Mali. This conference was neither the first of its kind in Mali nor will it be the last. Dawa has been present in Mali since the early-to-mid-1990s. Embassy sources acknowledge that Dawa espouses a fundamentalist ideology, but qualify that by specifying that the Dawa preachers in Mali, to present, have not incited to violence. One source noted that even the Algerian Government had decided to permit Dawa to set up shop in Algeria in recent years. Despite heavy recruitment efforts in Kidal, Gao and Mopti regions, Dawa still appears to have a very small following in Mali. Embassy contacts all note that Dawa and similar fundamentalist ideologies do not fit well in Malian culture. Although 90 percent of Malians are Muslims, the vast majority follow one of three Sufi sects, mixed for many with some level of traditional cultural belief and practice.

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Most Tuareg sources said that even though early recruitment efforts in Kidal and Gao met with some success, when Tuaregs discovered that Dawa required a very austere lifestyle most-- including Intallah ag Attaher, the Amenokal (traditional chief) of Kidal, and his sons Mohammed,

Alghabass and Atiyoub --left the organization. Some imams in northern Mali, e.g. Moussa ag Ali, keep one foot in the door of Dawa, in part to keep an eye on the organization. Overall, Tuareg sources consistently reiterate that although they are Muslims, they are Tuaregs first and hold fast to their culture. Among other aspects anathema to fundamentalist Islamic practice, Tuareg culture places women squarely in control of households and highly values cultural expressions such as music and dance. Tuaregs prefer to worry about enjoying this life rather than worry about ensuring the perfect afterlife.

¶4. (S/NF) Two National Assembly deputies (MPs)) one from Kidal and one from Gao) expressed concern that the Malian military and intelligence services would use the Dawa conference to attempt to link AQIM to the Kidal Tuareg population, branding them broadly as Salafists. The two deputies said if such a link between AQIM and the general Tuareg population were to gain credibility, it would damage current northern Malian efforts toward a rapprochement with the GOM. The MP from Gao Region, and a Malian National Guard officer present in Kidal at the time of the Dawa conference, separately told Emboffs the Dawa conference only attracted a few hundred participants, many of whom were foreigners, and that the conference only lasted one day. This contradicts a previous intel report (TD-314/079710-09) that the meeting lasted two days and attracted 1,000 attendees.

¶5. (S/NF) The MPs and the National Guard officer also noted unease among many Tuareg leaders regarding the return of Iyad

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ag Ghali from his posting as Consul General in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, to host the Dawa conference. Although Iyad only returned temporarily for the conference and other meetings, the two contacts said that many Kidal leaders saw Iyad as a polarizing element and a potential threat to both the traditional leadership and the local population's current desire for calm in Kidal. An MP believed Iyad hosted the conference not only due to his Dawa membership but also to return to Kidal in grand form to reinforce his relevance to the Kidal leadership after over a year spent in Jiddah. From the conference, Iyad travelled to Bamako for business meetings and then returned to Jiddah.

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